

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

**Executive – 24 June 2010**

## **Revised Charges for Pre-Planning Advice**

### **Report of the Growth and Development Manager**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mark Edwards)

#### **1. Executive Summary**

This report proposes revisions to charges made for providing officer advice to members of the public, developers and their agents on the merits of planning proposals prior to an application being submitted.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 This Council has charged for providing pre-application advice for a number of years. The majority of local planning authorities in the area now also charge or are proposing to do so. The charges were last revised in September 2008. The charges now proposed were considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 21 June 2010.

#### **3. The Proposed charges**

- 3.1 By approaching the Council for pre-application advice, members of the public and developers can ascertain whether there is a likelihood of whether permission will be granted for their proposal and/or whether amendments can be made prior to submission to improve its quality. This advice clearly does not commit the Council to a subsequent decision should an application be submitted.
- 3.2 It is widely accepted that engagement in pre-application discussions represents good practice and not only provides greater certainty for developers, but it also improves the efficiency of the planning application process and reduces the number of applications submitted which have little or no change of success. It also contributes towards improving the quality of development generally.

3.3 It is therefore important that the charges levied are not so high as to discourage engagement with the Council. The charges have therefore traditionally been set with an emphasis on ensuring that this is not the case rather than to recover the full cost of providing the service. This remains the case with these changes.

3.4 It is proposed to increase the majority of the charges by £10+VAT as follows:

Level 1 – Householder, Advertisement and Landscape advice. Three Preservation Orders and Listed Buildings (in cases where planning permission also required):-

Written Advice	-	£50 + vat @ 17.5% = £58.75
Meeting with note	-	£70 + vat @ 17.5% = £82.25

Level 2 – all other and Minor developments (eg. Less than 10 dwellings, 1000 sq ft industrial):

Written Advice	-	£90 + vat @ 17.5% = £105.75
Meeting with note	-	£130 + vat @ 17.5% = £152.75

Level 3 – Major developments (eg: more than 10 dwellings, 1,000 sq ft industrial):

Written Advice	-	£160 + vat @ 17.5% = £180.00
----------------	---	------------------------------

Meetings for major applications (level 3) are currently charged at £75 + vat per hour. However, it is felt that it would be fairer and easier to charge a flat rate as for other proposals. It is proposed to set this at £200 + vat @ 17.5% which amounts to £235.00 in total.

3.5 There is no charge for advice on revised proposals following a refusal of planning permission or the withdrawal of an application.

Advice on proposals which only require Listed Building Consent also do not attract a fee.

3.6 These proposals have been referred to the Council's Planning Agents Forum and no objections to the charges were received. Agents generally appreciate this service being provided.

3.7 The proposed guidance notes to be provided on the Council's website are attached as Appendix 1.

#### **4. Links to Corporate Aims**

- 4.1 The provision of good pre-application advice contributes to the delivery of high quality sustainable development and is therefore directly linked to the corporate aims of Regeneration, Affordable Housing and climate change.

**5. Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 It is not considered that these small increases will have any material impact in terms of people's ability to access this service.

**6. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Full Council adopts the proposed changes to charges relating to pre-application planning advice.

**Contact:** Tim Burton  
01823 358403  
t.burton@tauntondeane.gov.uk